

Mr. Speaker, an interim report released last week by the White House confirms what most observers believe, that the situation in Iraq is not improving. The Iraqi government has failed to meet the political benchmarks endorsed by the President last January and Iraqi security forces continue to perform below expected levels. But the President continues to ask us to stubbornly stay the course.

At the same time, U.S. troops are overextended, many having served multiple tours in Iraq. This is unfair to our soldiers, their families, and dangerous for the security of our nation. As retired Maj. General John Batiste recently noted, "Iraq is distracting America from what should be the focus... It is in America's best interest to rethink our national strategy, deliberately disengage from Iraq, refit and rearm our military, get serious about homeland security, and prepare to win the next phase of the struggle."

Last week this House voted to do exactly that. We will continue our commitment to redeploying our troops from Iraq in a responsible way. This Democratic House joins with the American people and our retired Generals in demanding a new direction in Iraq. This week, the Senate can join us by supporting the Levin-Reed amendment.